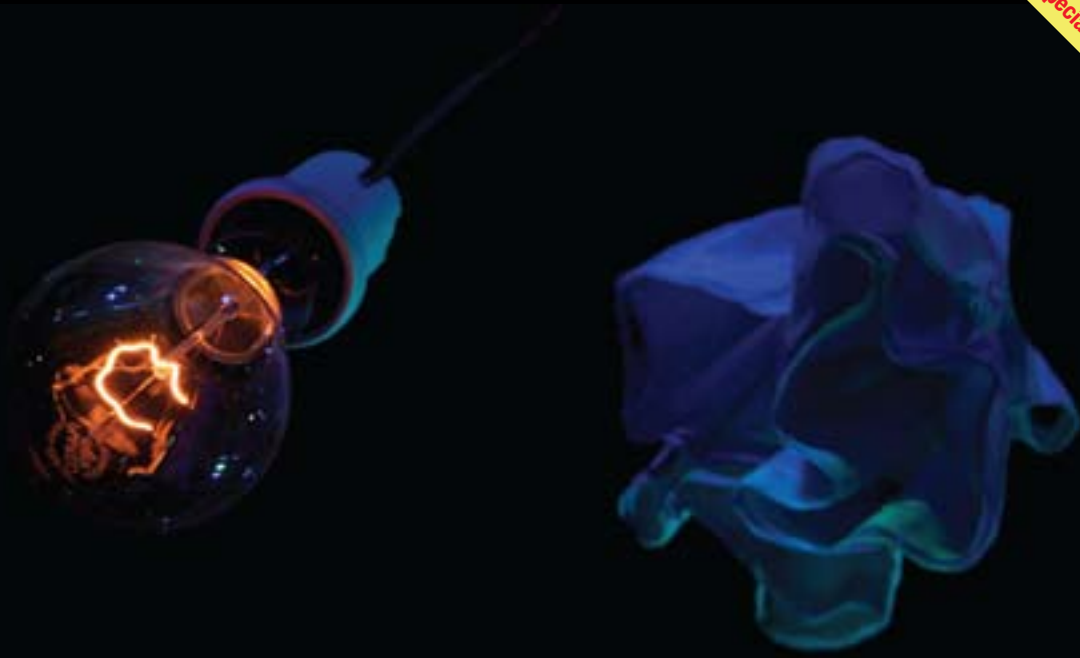


ALD # FOCUS

The Journal of the Association of Lighting Designers
"More art, fewer grammatical errors"



*Detail from The Memory of Water at LIPA, lit by Georg Spindler, the winner of this year's Michael Northen Bursary.
Photo by Jodie Svagr.*

Under the perfectly positioned single source this issue:

**Postcard from the Prague Quadrennial • More time for lighting • Working as an LD
• Michael Northen Awards • Roll up, roll up for the PLASA circus! • Lighting in 1952
Reviews from David Benedict ... and much more!**

October / November 2007

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Rick's Review

It has been a busy few months for the ALD. Whatever happened to the good old days of a lull in the summer except for the myriad challenges of lighting at the Edinburgh Festival?

There have been meetings with agents, professional members, student members and a very useful long Executive strategy meeting. We had the opportunity to talk about what the ALD is, and where we wanted to be going. As with any organisation that is run by volunteers it is essential that we examine what we should be doing better and why we bother to be involved.

I am pleased that despite many areas where we want to improve what the ALD can offer lighting designers, we all took pride in what has been achieved in the last few years. This gives us a stronger base from which to build. I am personally pleased that the exec is willing to keep working towards the sometime elusive goal of

raising the profile of lighting designers and improving the understanding of what we do by our colleagues, our employers, the press, and the wider public. I thank them for their commitment and also to the many members who are coming forward to help in specific areas. More involvement and encouragement from members is always welcome.

I have almost managed to catch up with Mark Jonathan in the race for Airmiles. I was delighted to be invited to participate in the Stage Lighting Master Class in Johannesburg and meet many emerging and established lighting designers. There was the same great pleasure that always happens when lighting folk get together to share information, problems and solutions.

As I write this I am preparing to go to Australia for the rest of the year to work on the first international production of *Billy Elliot*. While I am

excited to have another go at creating the lighting for this musical, I am feeling a little sad to be away from home so long. That seems to be our lot. So much of our work is away from base, and when in a new country the network of other lighting people is even more useful and welcome. I hope to be meeting some Australian lighting designers and students for some workshops, sponsored by Selecon, one of our valued corporate members.

It would be great if other LDs would let the office know when you are working on shows outside of London to expand the interaction of ALD members around the country. Even if it is just a chance to say "hi" in the bar, or slip some colleagues into a preview, it is great to have some company in the often-lonely world of working away from home. Maybe the ALD could even put some funds 'behind the bar' to help get things going? Let us know how we can help you make



As of August 7th I was sworn in as a British Citizen!

this happen. After all, that is really what the ALD has always and should always be about.

And speaking of networking, I am pleased to announce that Glasgow has been chosen as the host city for that most wonderful of colloquiums, *Showlight 2009*. The conference will be from Saturday 16th to Tuesday 19th May 2009 at the exciting new BBC studios. The call for papers will be coming out shortly. *Showlight* is really an event not to miss where theatre, TV, film, architectural professionals get to share what they are doing and what they are thinking. It is always stimulating and great fun!

Regards, Rick #

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PRO'S PLATFORM

For our first item in a new soapbox series within Mark Jonathan's *Professionals' Pages*, **Johanna Town** raises the current issue of squeezed lighting sessions.



Dear Marko,

I am sure by now we have all read the recent article in *The Stage* from *Dear Flyman* discussing the demise of the lighting session. How true is this? How do we feel? And what are we going to do about it?

I would be interested to know how many other light designers apart from myself enjoy not only their focus sessions but also their lighting sessions? Should the ALD be helping to preserve the little time we actually get on stage?

Should our lighting requirements be put into the ALD rider? Should we be drafting a letter to the producers explaining in more detail what we actually require, to do just the basics of our jobs productively? Should Equity be involved, should their contract have focus and lighting stipulations?

Focus day minus one (top left).
Focus day nightmare (top right).
Finished (bottom).

Producers are setting greater terms and conditions into our contracts, putting in penalty clauses for delivery of plans and attendance in the venue. Why shouldn't we add some of our own? For instance, refusing to focus without a set in place; demanding to build in X amount of time for lighting in each production schedule, even if some of this time is after the first preview?

Sets have become more complicated, they take longer to put up and have more Health and Safety issues attached to them. Production managers seem to understand this and often take two to three days now to install these complicated beasts. Unfortunately for us the producers have not changed their opening deadlines. So between the set taking longer and Health & Safety making technical rehearsal periods shorter, the focus and lighting sessions are getting squeezed onto shorter time slots and lighting designers are finding themselves under even more pressure. We have

all been asked to focus with the set still being built.

Personally, I try to insist that all other work stops and tools are cleared away, even if the set is unfinished. The stage should be a safe place for me to work, as well as for the technicians working for me, especially whilst wandering around in the dark. More importantly though, the stage is my palette; the place I will be creative in for the first time and it is hard to be creative with hammering and screwing and tools scattered all over the floor. Just like an actor and director in their rehearsal room or the set designer in their studio, I have to be given the same creative time.

Of course every production is different, with its own specific needs. Some shows require more focusing than others and some more lighting time. The type of lighting time is also different depending on the production. Companies often have a model technical schedule, but as we know, no two shows are the same and there needs to be more flexibility within these

schedules to suit the individual production. This should be discussed at an early stage so everyone is in agreement.

My personal favourite is a quiet focus session, with a set (preferably the correct colour) and no one else. A focus period which gives you time to stand back and look at what you have done and time to change your mind. Next, a solo lighting session followed by another with the whole creative team. I also think it's important to have a long enough technical rehearsal for plotting and focusing with the actors.

This lighting time may seem totally unachievable to some of you, whilst to others it's a given. I have worked to the method above and really enjoy the freedom it gives me to explore the production I am working on.

If we could start from a blank canvas and ask for the ideal requirement to meet our creative needs, what would we want? And, should we be fighting for it?

*Regards, Johanna Town,
Lighting Designer.*

PROFESSIONALS' COLOUR SUPPLEMENT

I hear from our Focus editor that everyone seems busier than ever. So... that sounds good, but of course it does mean we all have less time to devote to ALD affairs and writing for Focus. This should not be a reason for giving up; we simply have to find a way of managing to do both. Let's face it, we are constantly expected to do the impossible in production so I have every confidence we can run our association as well as do our 'real' jobs.

The way ahead

I believe that the ALD is in a positive period of transition and to that end the Exec spent a day working with John Leventhall on prioritising and envisioning where the association might go in the next five years. One of my priorities is to get more working LDs involved in professional matters; I really appreciate the work that other LDs are already doing on our behalf in different areas.

I'm keen to get more LDs to speak up in *Focus* as well as be actively involved in ALD affairs.

So, I'm delighted that Jo Town is leading off on page 4 with her letter in our new section 'Pro's Platform'.



Professional meeting @ PLASA

I was in two minds as to whether we should hold a professional meeting at PLASA; would members be too busy catching up on the latest stuff to come to a meeting? We went ahead with the meeting and although attendance was lower than I would have liked you don't need that many LDs to be in a room together to have an interesting meeting.

We discussed a number of current LD issues at PLASA. Andy Collier talked about *Focus* and his commitment to professional issues. Andy is always keen to hear ideas from members for possible publication. John Leventhall introduced some of the work he's been doing on developing discounts and deals for the membership; more about this soon.

We discussed what we should do next, following on from the **letter to producers**. It was agreed that we should send another letter to keep the issue of our claim to producing managements throughout the UK that lighting designers

are generally underpaid for the contribution they make to productions. We will produce a draft and circulate this for approval.

Rick is keen that we endeavour to use **the Rider**. As we've said previously any clauses that are not agreed or are not appropriate for a particular job can be struck out. Please let Ian in the office have any feedback you have about using it. Colin Grenfell is working on the International Version (this is being developed for LDs who are working in a different country to their home).

The ALD is considering using a **Public Relations specialist** to work on elevating the profile of 'the lighting designer'. If you have any views on this then please let us know.

Fee intelligence

At the Professional's meeting in February we agreed to develop a database of fee information. Ian has created a form with which to record your lighting fees, and all professional members should

have already received a copy by email. All the lighting designers we've asked were happy to share information on fees. We are keen to monitor what different producers are paying and to try and ensure that fees are increased on an annual basis. If you would like to participate in the scheme by giving information to the ALD you can also draw on data on a 'needs basis' that we have collected. Ideally, the ALD would have a record of what all the producing managements are currently paying.

On tour

This time last year I was washing my passports while trying to rush between Chichester, Washington, NYC, Munich, the ROH, LA and Leeds. This autumn, I'm travelling again but this time its Chichester, Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester and London. I'm still overdosing on airports, having flown recently in or out of London City, Glasgow, Southampton and Gatwick which I have renamed Crapwick. BAA

really need to pull their finger out. London City is fab but it has to close for 24 hours at the weekend from midday Saturday to Sunday which can force London based travellers to have to use Gatwick. I discovered something else curious. I have a wheelee bag that fits easily in the BA frame for cabin baggage; it just fits into an Easy Jet frame and it doesn't fit into a Fly-B one. I found myself flying Fly-B and the flight that was booked for me didn't include my hold baggage. It transpires you have to pre-book your suitcase at a charge of £5 or pay £9 at the check-in... The man at check-in said Fly-B have been laughing all the way to the bank since the ban on liquids over 100ml came in. I'm tempted to boycott Fly-B.

Just following on from Jo Town's point of view I am currently staggered by the lack of interest shown by some touring producers in ensuring that shows on tour are either adequately resourced in people, equipment or adequate time

to ensure that the outcome is good. I thought perhaps we might have moved on from expecting staff to break their backs working long hours without meal breaks but it seems we haven't. I'm also frustrated by a lack of expertise in production management, the lack of sections or even accurate ground plans and 'fantasy' schedules. I'd better not say too much...

And finally... After nine fantastic years at the Old Vic – **Phil Gladwell** is leaving to pursue his freelance career as a lighting designer. We wish you every success.

Best wishes to **Wayne Dowdeswell** who is taking that leap for freedom as a freelance LD after many years of commitment at the RSC's Swan Theatre in Stratford. #

OFFICE ORACLE

Latest news from Ian's production desk

PLASA

It was good to see those of you who made it to PLASA this year. I was busy lighting a show for most of the time, but popped in when I could. My thanks to James M. Lee and Tim Lutkin for their commitment to managing the stand so well this time. We should also like to thank White Light for their help with the get-out.

Michael Northen Bursary

We were delighted to host the award ceremony for the Michael Northen Bursary on the ALD stand at PLASA. The winner was Georg Spindler from Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts who was presented with the £500 prize by Rick Fisher. The ETC sponsored runner-up prize of £250 was awarded to Catherine Crick of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Rick presented the ALD runner-up, Dan Large of Central School of Speech

and Drama, with his award of £250. Further details are in Mike Robertson's view of this year's competition starting on page 9.

Focus Subscription

At this year's AGM, the Exec proposed changing the current Non-Profit Organisation category of membership into one specifically for the provision of supplying *Focus* on a subscription basis to interested parties. The feedback we received was

mixed, and therefore the decision has been taken not to proceed with this change at the current time.

ALD Website

The ALD website will be having a few minor additions to it over the next few months. There is now a new Resources page available from the home page. Once there, you will be able to access the current versions of the *ALD Contract Rider* and *Suggested Fees Document*. We will slowly

add to the resources here as current projects reach their conclusion.

In the near future we will also be offering a members' page which will only be able to be accessed once you have logged in. This will become an area for downloading more member-orientated documents as well as being able to access the various members' benefits currently in the pipeline. We are also hoping that we will be able to offer the facility to view past issues of *Focus* online in a reduced PDF format, although the logistics of this have yet to be finally decided.

Be assured that as the new services come on line, we will let you know about them through the email bulletin service as well as here in *Focus*.

Equity Website

ALD members who are also Equity members may be

interested to note that our union has recently updated and re-designed its website www.equity.org.uk. You will need to register for it and logging in requires an up to date membership number (much as the ALD website does). Once registered and logged in, there is a wealth of new material to view and download.

Most relevant to our members are details about and the list of representatives on the Theatre Designers' Committee (including four ALD members), the current TMA or ITC/Equity Designer Rates (along with those of other workers in the Theatre, Variety and Dance category), and lots more general information about Equity and its workings.

Sponsored Student Scheme 2008

This scheme, funded through the corporate members' subscriptions, is for students



Dan Large, Fred Foster, Catherine Crick, Rick Fisher and Georg Spindler at the Michael Northen Bursary Award presentation.



studying at Conference of Drama School Colleges and was opened again for applications at PLASA 07. The closing date for applications is Christmas 2007. All current student members have been contacted via email. Even if you are already a member of the scheme for 2007/08 you will need to complete a new application form and return it to the office complete with proof of your student status in order to maintain their current membership beyond April 2008. Please note that if you do not apply your membership will revert to a normal student category and you will need to pay an annual subscription.

We would also be pleased to hear from corporate members with ideas for meetings or offers of work experience tailored specifically to our sponsored students.

Subscription Payments

Thanks to all those members who recently paid up their subscription arrears. Next year's subscriptions are due in a few month's time, so

could all members ensure that which ever method they choose to pay their subscription that they ensure there is a reference to where the payment originated. I have received a few electronic transfers lately that have no name or membership number to them, and this not only increases the amount of work and time taken in the office to query the payment with our bank, but also results in members potentially having their membership suspended if I cannot trace the payment. If you have paid your subscription lately but have yet to receive a confirmation letter complete with new sticker for your membership card, please contact the office as soon as possible.

Yearbook 2008

It's that time of the year when the next edition of the *Members' Yearbook* is due to be produced. You can ensure that your contact details and yearbook entry are correct by checking them online (www.ald.org.uk), or you can send

them to the office and we will do it. Details as they are entered online as of Thursday 1st November 2007 will be those that are printed in the yearbook. #

Membership drive



We published a sample copy of Focus to distribute at PLASA to summarise the benefits of joining the Association and to illustrate the style and content of our bi-monthly journal. This was generously sponsored by ETC, and we have some copies left which are happy to offer to existing members who can use them to pass on to potential new student, associate or corporate members. If you would like copies to distribute, please contact office@ald.org.uk.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Professional Members

Scott Allan, Queensland, Australia

Associate Members

Phil Saunders, Liverpool. **Nicholas Bartley**, Cornwall. **Louise McCoy**, Tony Pandy. **Mohamed Ghanem**, Cairo, Egypt. **Hamed Arafa Mohamed**, Cairo, Egypt. **Howard Lawrence**, Southampton. **Andrew G. Ellis**, London (rejoining).

Student Members

Lucy Kanakri, Penarth. **James M Lee**, Wokingham. **Daniel Bunn**, Chelmsford. **Hugh Carruthers**, Liverpool. **Nathaniel Seekins**, Searsport, USA.

Michael Northen Bursary – a judge’s notebook

The bursary was set up by Michael Northen, a founding member of the ALD and a previous President, shortly before he passed away in 2001. It takes the form of a £500 prize awarded to a student who shows exemplary talent in lighting design. We asked Mike Robertson about this year’s award from the judges’ perspective.

Mary Pope, who graduated from RADA in 2006 and is currently the student representative of the ALD, approached a handful of lighting designers to judge the entrants for this year’s Michael Northen bursary. Meeting on the 29th of August to go through the submissions at Chichester Festival Theatre were Mark Jonathan, Rick Fisher, Sam Gibbons, Mark White and I, with Paul Pyant having previously studied the entries and commented beforehand. My thanks go at this point to Mary who did a great job of coordination.


Faced with a composite document for each project student applicants were asked to submit work showing the development and processes of a successfully realised lighting design

performance project that had been completed in the last year. Materials such as photographs, storyboards, plans and any other work the student felt appropriate could be submitted, along

with a 500-word synopsis of the project detailing the processes used to realise the lighting design.

Although this was a comment made after our judgement was complete, we

Mike Robertson



Mike trained at Guildhall and with Natasha Chivers won this year’s Olivier Award for the multi award winning Sunday In The Park With George. Other recent work includes Othello (Birmingham Stage Company); Lonestar and Private Wars with Shane Ritchie (Kings Head); Havana Rakatan (Peacock); Howard Goodall’s Days of Hope; Steven Berkoff in Sit & Shiver; The Firework Maker’s Daughter at Det Norske Teatret, Oslo; Three Men In A Boat on National Tour; Classic Absurdity at The Birmingham Hippodrome; Lesley Garrett, Travelling Light and The Singer at The Royal Albert Hall. Outside of the theatre he has worked with television companies including BBC, STV, ZBC, Meridian and LWT and lit events for clients including National Magazines, Elton John Aids Foundation, Dell, Oki, Texaco, Credit Lyonnaise, Ford (UK), British Midland, Studio 54, Tommy Hilfiger, British Airways, HSBC. Mike has also designed extensive architectural lighting and worked on the Virgin Atlantic fleet designing lighting for the cabins before then working on the interior lighting design of the Airbus A380. He also has a column in Musical Stages magazine writes articles both trade and general interest for glossies to broadsheets.



A page from Georg's picture research for *The Memory of Water*.

The Memory of Water. Lighting by Georg Spindler. Mary (Rachel Rae) has visions of her past life. Photo: Jodie Svagr.



all felt that there was a need to standardise the way that the information was collated and presented as the variant of this was marked. More on this later.

What were we looking for?

We each had to look through eight entries and make comments on them. What we looked for was clarity in the explanation of the design intention with account of how well accomplished the intent was and what had been learned along the way. With materials such as illustrated notes, lighting plans, photographs and colour swatches the judges were also able to assess results not based on the applicants own report, allowing instead the 'results to speak for themselves'.

Conscious of the fact that not everyone is as capable a photographer and journalist as they may be successful as a lighting designer the documents were used to evaluate the project in hand and see the passion within that work that marks out the

seeds of a talented designer to go on and produce work of a high standard in the years to come. We were in essence appraising the attitude, aptitude and abilities of the entrants now to nurture their growth in the future.

What did we get?

The standard of the lighting plans was variable and as with the quality of the 'write ups' we were looking for clarity and not which ones were the glossiest. Some of the hand (stencil) drawn efforts were frankly more accessible than some of the CAD offerings. Technology was not necessarily adding progress; much like the business of lighting design itself.

The range of projects was broad and the styles and approaches taken ranged too. The most successful three (which we were unanimous about, incidentally) were diverse in their resources, requirements and the styles that had been successfully applied to them.

It's presentation again...

It occurred to us that as we work in a visual medium, the care taken to present the submissions reflects somewhat on the person behind the project. Nothing flash was required although it may become a formal suggestion to future generations to consider how the appearance of their input can influence the

thoughts that we formed about the governing of their other creative abilities.

The standard was high and as for our three winners, the projects that they were involved with were suitably contrasting and further served to show that what we judged, and indeed selected, were based on the qualities of the designers.

Georg Spindler (Winning the Michael Northen bursary) had worked on *The Memory of Water* at LIPA which used a minimal rig to great effect in this studio space. We were particularly impressed by the picture research and the designer's ability to replicate elements of it, thus realising a design that was just as acutely intended.



The Memory of Water. Lighting by Georg Spindler. Teresa (Kathryn Marley) and Mary (Rachel Rae) in their mother's old bedroom, arguing. Photo: Jodie Svag.

Catherine Crick (winning the ETC prize) for *Quadrophenia* at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama had used a mixture of automated and conventional fixtures to produce an attractive hybrid between successful dramatic and rock and roll style lighting.

The runner up **Dan Large** had designed *Ghost Sonata* in a site-specific production that used a small number of well chosen sources to produce minimal, sharp and memorable images.

It is uplifting that the benchmark is at this level. Enough to make us older

ones rather fearful and clutching for our mobiles to ring 'Learn Direct'.

This page and opposite: Quadrophenia. Lighting by Cat Crick, photos: Kirsten McTernan.





Ghost Sonata. Lighting Dan Large, photo: Sam Holden.



SO YOU WANT TO WORK IN PERFORMANCE LIGHTING?

Nick Moran offers some background, and answers to some frequently asked questions, on how to get into the performance lighting industry.

What does a Lighting Designer (LD) do?

Put simply, we paint pictures with light. Most of the lighting designers in the ALD work in theatre, dance, opera, rock and roll, or events. These are all essentially 'live', and that is where most of us get our buzz. Lighting designers also work in recorded media, such as film and television, in the virtual world on games programmes and aircraft simulators for example, and along side architects. This short article concentrates on LDs working in live performance.

LDs for live performance usually work with a director, other designers, and a script or text. Good work is most often the product of collaboration and mutually beneficial compromise. It is also usually based on a clear understanding of the text, and the performers, and

how they are using the space and it often requires at least as much intellectual work as practical work.

On top of this, a good LD must be able to hold many different considerations in her or his head at once; respond to changes in schedule or ideas, manage a technical team, remember what each unit is doing for each stage picture, and keep an overall perspective. All this and more just to paint pictures with light, and perhaps to have your work not even consciously noticed by most of the audience. But if you are an LD, when you get it right it is the best thing!

Formal Training

It is perfectly possible to become a successful LD with no formal training – but it is a lot harder than it used to be. The increased expectations of producers and other

employers, and audiences, the need to understand much of the technology behind lighting rigs, and the current lack of opportunities to 'learn on the job', mean most entrants into the industry will need some formal training. (Perhaps the last sector of the professional industry to offer opportunities to un-trained staff are the hire companies – though even here you will probably be expected to go on courses if you want to get on.)

Having acknowledged that, **what do you want to train as?** You can be an important part of the lighting world without being an LD. Almost every rig needs a production LX and almost every venue needs a chief LX. Both these roles usually need support from generalist 'sparks' and increasingly from specialists such as programmers, power specialists, moving light

specialists etc. For many practically-minded students, a qualification that leads directly to work in these areas may be more appropriate than one in lighting design.

Next question is **what level do you want to train at?** At present there are two vocational BA degree courses in Lighting Design for theatre, one at Rose Bruford College and one at Central School of Speech and Drama. There are also a number of degree courses offering lighting design modules as part of a broader theatre practice training, such as the Royal Welsh and Royal Scottish Academies, and others with a strong relevance to lighting practice and technology. There are also shorter courses at this level offered by Drama Schools, for example the 2 year course at LAMDA leading to a Dip HE. If you want a degree, and have

Nick Moran

Nick is senior lecturer in lighting at the Central School of Speech and Drama and pathway leader of Design for Performance on the BA in Theatre Practice. He is an education rep on the ALD Executive.

the A-levels or equivalent to gain entry, research the courses, and see which one is likely to suit you best.

In England & Wales, Further Education Colleges focus on **Vocational Training**, primarily for 16 to 19 year olds. This sector offers a number of courses aspects of live production, including BTec and Foundation Degrees. These will shortly be joined by the National Diploma and possibly Modern Apprenticeship schemes through the proposed National Skills Academy tasked with training technicians for music concerts, events and theatre.



A few words of warning: find out as much as you can about the course and the institution, and find out what sort of jobs students from the course go on to do. If you want to work in music theatre, it is probably not a good idea to train an institution that has no music theatre performers, and with no record of students leaving to work in music theatre. There are a lot of institutions trying to attract the brightest and keenest students, make sure you know what you will be getting from your training.

Also, (and this will be difficult) think about what you might do if it turns out you don't like working the long anti-social hours that are part of most theatre-makers lives? Will your qualification mean anything outside the small world of theatre?

What should I do while I am still at School?

Different institutions give different answers to this question, so if you have a good idea of where you want to go, write and ask the tutor in charge of the course. For



Where do you start working?

At the top of the profession, the LD will rarely get involved with the rigging of their lanterns. However, many (if not most) of us started out realising the designs of others; as a member of a team of 'sparks' working in a theatre or some other space, or perhaps working for a hire company. Even if you have done a dedicated course in Lighting Design, it is most likely that you will also have to start work facilitating someone else's designs for some time before you get to a position when you can earn a living as an LD.

Even if you are designing lighting straight out of college or university, it will usually be at a level where you need to be able to rig, focus and plot yourself. If you are prepared to do that, there are a large number of opportunities available out there for keen and talented young LD, and you will be learning new ways of solving problems with every job – just don't expect to make a fortune.

Other opportunities to

continue learning whilst earning a living come from work as assistant, programmer or chief for established LDs. Most of these require you to establish a reputation as competent and pleasant to work with. Even while you are still at college, or on those small gigs, bare this in mind.

Lastly, join the ALD and find out more about the work of LDs in the UK and elsewhere, and about the industry you are interested in becoming part of. This will help you make decisions about where and how to train, it will impress any interviewer too. Good Luck! #



the BA at Central School of Speech and Drama, we advise you to do A-levels you enjoy.

For lighting designer candidates, some evidence that you can engage with text, and are visually aware is essential. We like to see good photographs, perhaps of your work as an LD, but also to show us that you have an awareness of what makes a good picture.

For the more technical courses (e.g. Production Lighting at Central) some science and/or maths, either

at A-level or very good GCSEs. There are a lot of numbers in lighting and a lot of laws of physics to understand.

Most institutions recruiting students into vocational education will ask them *"and what do you want to do when you leave?"* Make sure you have thought about that – not only to be able to answer the question, but because you may be about to spend two, three or more years of your life doing this every day, and paying for the privilege! Be sure it is what you want to do

PLASA 07 aftershock... Guy Kornetzki

"Welcome one and all to the greatest show on earth!

Step right up to feast your eyes on the biggest, the ugliest, the brightest and the most colourful of them all!

They are freaks of nature you can't help but stare at!

For the mere price of admission you will get the spectacular experience of a lifetime!"

(Darkness...a cymbal crash echoes...snap on a single, sharp followspot beam in the distance)

Welcome to the aftershock of PLASA 2007 – the stuff that matters after the bright lights have been turned off, the smoke has cleared and the sales pitches' echoes have faded away.

A quick summary of what we've had so far: we went through McCandless, we've had hundreds of pars on a concert stage, the impressionistic HMI's in opera, the Svobodas in dance, colour scrollers in



The Miltec stand with its range of DecoAir – inflatable, translucent, cone-shaped 'bags' mounted on RGB light sources.



Zap Technology's BigLite.



On stand with Martin Professional.

theatre, and moving lights, well, all over the place. So what does 2007 bring? Let me give a clue: it's very small, versatile and energy efficient, and allegedly has the power to save the world. No it's not a Superman MiniMe. Answers at the end (though no prizes will be given as *Focus* is currently under review of its premium phone-in facilities).

(Soft light up on a contortionist balancing on the leg of a chair, darkness all around)

Concert lighting people think that theatre lighting people are just a bunch of luvvies; Theatre lighting people think architecture lighting people are just engineers, and everyone looks down at nightclub people, but secretly wishing they could also work in a 24/7 party environment. So when I saw the **MiITec** stand with its range of DecoAir – inflatable, translucent, cone-shaped 'bags' mounted on RGB light sources, my first thought was "whatever". But in fact it was more than that – those

internally lit, colour changing cones sort of became a solid entity of light. It was a case of light becoming a 3D form in its own right; not merely being visible through haze but actually taking a physical shape in space. Can we next have a set made of 3D, coloured light? And texture?

Another example of a substance becoming a form in its own right was water: **Le Maitre** was showing the Aqua Visual FX. Described as a "waterfall billboard", visual data is displayed by synchronised drops of water that make up the visuals as they drop to the ground. It's not a projection surface, although it can be used as such as well; the water drops are the actual pixels making up the low-res images. It's an interesting concept in a wider sense, but for now has a limited gimmick appeal.

This later innovation, also featured in the PLASA Innovation Gallery, made me think of another possible trend: one that may develop further in the future. In the

last few years there was a strong emphasis on the lighting fixture – the tool that produces light. It was most evident with the flood of moving lights in the early 2000s, when arguably every manufacturer launched their version of a moving light fixture. But last year and this year, I saw manufacturers focusing more on ways of reinventing the projection surface – where light ends up rather than where it starts from. I hope this interest will continue to develop along side innovations in light sources.

(Snap to a Mime artist under a bare light bulb. He is 'leaning' against a 'wall'. All is perfectly still)

Martin Professional's stand was the one that caught my attention this time. I noticed it for two reasons: firstly, the clean and elegant lines, the colours and the furniture arrangement were all well balanced, inviting yet beautiful to look at. Secondly, I noticed a marked change in the ratio between product

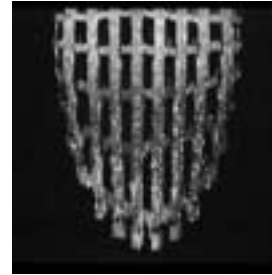
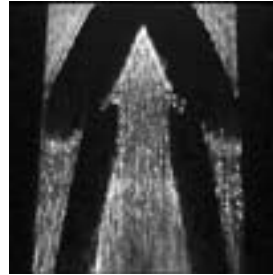
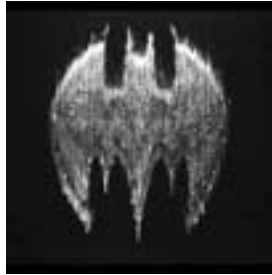
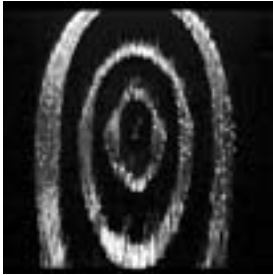


Maple Leaf by Le Maitre's Aqua Visual FX.

ranges: it seemed that perhaps for the first time, the range of architectural products was given a display space and focus that was equal to that of the entertainment range of products. As far as I remember in the past, the entertainment range was usually the clear centre stage of attention – swirling, colour changing and strobing, whilst

the architecture range was confined to side walls and tables. This might be another sign that architecture lighting is coming ever closer to entertainment lighting.

All in all, Martin's stand had struck the perfect balance between effective and indeed impressive product display, and the often missing human element.



A selection of images by Le Maitre's Aqua Visual FX.

(Bright backlight onto a large, rusty cage, silhouette of a massive curled figure, sound of heavy chains)

“My dad is a fireman / yeah, well my dad is a lawyer; my dad can beat your dad / maybe, but my dad can drag your dad’s ass through court forever...” (What can I say, my childhood was complex...)

Later in life it becomes about fancy cars, expensive wristwatches, large TV screens, designer clothes – showing others how successful and generally great we are by the stuff that we own. So what’s the equivalent for lighting manufacturers? The size of their, err, fixture: from the searchlights at Hollywood premieres

of yesteryears, to **Space Cannon**, to **Syncrolite**; from 3 to 10kw per fixture? Last year I thought Martin’s TW1 was big, this year I saw **Zap Technology’s BigLite!** I asked a nice French guy from Zap why we need such mammoth light sources: ones that also pan and tilt, as well as colour change. He said, amongst other things, that: “other lights are as big...” Although I don’t agree that this is a valid argument, I do understand the manufacturers’ commercial need to stay competitive. And as far as the BigLite is concerned, and almost against my better judgement, I must admit those ‘big guys’ were surprisingly nippy yet quiet. And I’m not the only one

to think that – responses (and orders) have been positive, I understand, so it’s already giving Syncrolite something to worry about...

(Flick of metallic switches, a magnetic hum, and bright white light floods in from everywhere)

The answer to the question in the beginning, about the trend of 2007, was clear – LED has featured in almost every stand, it was hailed as the new source of almost every light fixture. Two applications ruled across the show: projection surface, and colour changing technology. Yes, LED technology has a lot to offer now and in the future, but it is wrongly regarded,

and marketed, as the magic solution to everything. From spots to floods, stick an LED source and imagine you’ve ticked all the boxes. It seems once again, as it was with moving lights a few years ago, manufacturers are blindingly fulfilling a trend rather than stopping to consider issues of functionality, application and solution.

This year, a colleague of mine who is a lighting designer in the architecture industry joined me for a tour of PLASA. She wanted the benefit of my entertainment experience as we walked around. I pointed out and explained various elements to her, from rigging to moving lights, audio to lighting control

systems and projection. She was very interested and had many questions which I happily tried to answer. This made me realise how versatile and fulfilling our industry is as a whole, and our profession in particular. We have to draw on many fields of knowledge in order to bring our work to life in the best possible way. And PLASA, although arguably overbearing and off-the-mark at times, is still the best place to research and experience the various tools of our profession.

See you next year... #

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LETTERS

Dear Focus,

At some point LDs are going to have to think about the proposed noise at work regulations that may come into effect some time fairly soon. The limits on what a worker can be exposed to are actually quite low, especially as they are taken throughout the working day. So spending all day in rehearsal for a 'loud' musical or opera almost certainly could take someone over the limit.

If the LD has 'employed' an assistant/associate then the LD might be responsible for ensuring they don't exceed the limits. Obviously this will be an issue for all employees and something the producers will have to manage, but it might be worth thinking about. The LD will probably want to consider their own exposure...

We had a recent concert with an orchestra knocking out peaks of about 97dB (in the centre of the auditorium), to keep within the daily limits we would have to limit exposure to half an hour or vary the programme to reduce the levels – or issue some form of hearing protection. It's still early days, but something that will eventually affect us one way or another – whatever our personal opinion.

*Regards, Geoff Spain,
Technical Coordinator,
Snape Maltings*

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PLASA 2008 *

* the ALD will have a presence
at these events.

Keep an eye on www.ald.org.uk/diary for more information on these and other events and members' show openings. If we have missed any interesting events in this list, please let us know!

Light Relief – an immediate stress buster



Freelance production electrician Chris Luscombe is singing the praises of Light Relief for its support during an extremely lean time

“One day I was working on *Starlight Express* in Edinburgh, the next I was in hospital with the prospect of being unable to work for many weeks,” explained Chris. The injury wasn’t even work related – Chris was walking down some steps when he twisted his ankle, to be told in hospital that he had both fractured and dislocated it. Initially he was told he wouldn’t be able to work for five to six weeks, but he soon found out that his job meant he would actually be off work for 14 weeks. Chris’s wife works for him, looking after the administration side of the business, so no work meant no income at all.

Chris said: “We have two young children, a mortgage, lease on a car – all the usual trappings – so it was all a real shock. I had a small insurance policy, but the payout fell way short of what I needed, covering only about half of our regular outgoings. I knew of Light Relief but was hesitant about contacting them, even though I was really stressed about how we were going to cope, until one of my colleagues spurred me on.

“The trustees at Light Relief were brilliant. I knew the charity wouldn’t be a continual source of funds, but they awarded me 50% of my outgoings on my mortgage and the car for two months, which made such a difference. I was able to afford some private physiotherapy treatment, which actually got me back to work a good four weeks earlier than anticipated.”

Having suffered his accident on April 30, Chris didn’t start work again until August 12, catching up with *Starlight Express* in Bradford! He continues, “After such a long break, I’m only just getting back up to speed and start work on *Hairspray* next week. The support from the industry has been tremendous and once we get back on our feet, I am certainly going to give something back to Light Relief. It was fantastic.” #

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LIGHTING IN VIEW

Continuing our series of lighting reviews, we are delighted to welcome back David Benedict, UK arts critic for Variety.

Lighting designers are whores. No more so than freelance journalists, of course. I'm choosy about who I wrote for – *Daily Mail*? Thanks, but no thanks – but given the right circumstances (and fee) I'll consider getting into bed, as it were, with any number of editors.

Yet there's no denying that a mature relationship with trusted colleagues yields dividends. A team is far likelier to push itself towards more audacious choices if everyone shares taste and trusts one another. That certainly appeared to be the case on English National Opera's *Death in Venice*, which was, quite simply, one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen on a stage.

The opera's star is supposed to be the performer taking on the role of the ascetic writer Aschenbach who, in almost three hours,



English National Opera Death in Venice. Full stage with Ian Bostridge as Aschenbach (centre), lighting: Jean Kalman. Photo: Neil Libbert.

never leaves the stage. But in Deborah Warner's production, without ever overbalancing the proceedings, the star was Jean Kalman.

Warner, Kalman and set designer Tom Pye have worked together on and off for over a decade and, in the very best way, it shows. On this production – Warner's most eloquently understated work in years – the input of all the elements appeared, thrillingly, virtually indivisible.

The opera is divided between Aschenbach's reflective sung monologues – presented here against neutral dark grey walls covered with projections of reversed-out, elegant handwriting – and scenes of action. The latter were dramatised with such exquisite effects of light as to be quite literally breathtaking. As fresh, contrasting states appeared I actually audibly gasped. More than once.

Pye's spacious, supremely evocative design did much of its work via flooring. The scenes on the Lido used a sort of boardwalk while in interior scenes strips of

shiny dark floor helped evoke grandeur. Kalman used their reflective surface to bounce light to create dreamily watery textures.

Nowhere was their work more powerful than in the conjuring of the magnificent Hotel des Bains. Again, Pye provided an ideal lighting canvas by using the full, giant width of the Coliseum stage, tall black panels and huge translucent cream curtains wafting gently in the wind. The hotel manager sang proudly of "the view", the panels slid back and Kalman's light flooded forth: voice, orchestra and the dramatic moment all climaxed simultaneously.

Kalman's frankly ravishing changing versions of that view – chilled by early morning fog, ignited by hot sunlight, soured by yellow sickness – captured the shifting liquidities of Venice in everything from its fin-de-siècle splendour to its sickly cast of death.

Speaking of sickly, Peter Mumford used a queasy, almost greasy greeny-yellow colour to superbly unsettling

effect in *The Hothouse* at the National Theatre.

This was another case of a long-term relationship delivering the goods. Mumford and designer Hildegard Bechtler have worked together on all manner of projects from *Siegfried* and *Gotterdammerung* in Scottish Opera's Ring cycle to *Always*, a best-forgotten musical (about Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson, since you ask) whose outstandingly handsome design was in inverse proportion to the dire quality of the material.

Pinter's *Hothouse* lies somewhere between those polarities. A piece by a master rather than a masterpiece, what looks initially like a farcical comedy turns expressionist and very nasty. Ian Rickson's direction never managed to unify the varied acting styles on display but the play was given coherence by the designers. Mumford and Bechtler plus Stephen Warbeck (music) and Ian Dickinson (sound) created a forbidding, impersonal institution with dingy, bleak,

white-tiled corridors and shabby rooms in a manner creepily anodyne yet eerily beautiful.

Although they have only worked together four times in ten years, indivisibility of input is the hallmark of another duo: Paule Constable and director Marianne Elliott. Their *Saint Joan* was one of the year's highlights.

Were the scaldingly sidelit tableaux of peasants the work of choreographer Hofesh Schechter, Elliott or an inspiration by Constable? Who was responsible for placing Joan upstage in a tight special so that she could be picked out of the enveloping darkness offsetting the scene downstage? Who cares. Their vivid visual presences charged up foreground action, bringing dramatic life and emotional perspective to scenes which in lesser productions have been bogged down in theoretical debate.

However, this long-term-relationship-beats-a-one-night-stand proposition only goes so far. Neil Austin's

two most recent designs have been with directors with whom he had never previously collaborated.

Given that Thea Sharrock's design team of Richard Hudson and Adam Silverman did such a powerful job staging Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* in a tiny, sweaty pit at the 64-seat Gate theatre, it made sense that Sharrock chose a new team to re-conceive the show for the 1,167-seat Olivier.

Ultimately, the latter's scale reduces the required intensity of O'Neill's drama. But alongside Paterson Joseph's searing, seriously impressive central performance, Austin unostentatiously does everything to persuade you otherwise.

There's not much he can do with the first scene set with designer Robin Don's gilded shack of a palace marooned within the cavernous space. Yet once the central character flees to the woods, Austin commands the emotional temperature.

Shooting light through Don's suggestive giant overhanging

disc of corrugated metal, he creates a wide-ranging palette of moods within a governing sense of rising panic. In addition, he adds a follow-spot to contrast Jones against ever-steelier moonlight chilling the engulfing forest, and further demonises the character via starkly angled footlights. As Jones's visions become more fevered, the haze-filled air turns from caustic orange to bloody scarlet, defining but never saturating the malevolent mood.

There's a satisfying irony to Austin's illustration of an apocalyptic journey into one man's heart of darkness via magisterial use of bright light. *Parade*, however, is its obverse: the downward spiral of an innocent man lynched metaphorically by a corrupt legal system and literally by bigots.

The multiple locations of Alfred Uhry and Jason Robert Brown's musical would make demands of the largest stage. On the Donmar's tiny thrust, it's a serious challenge but Austin and designer

Christopher Oram's answers to the problems it poses are exhilarating.

Using Oram's double-height unit set as a suggestive

backdrop, Austin's lighting constantly reimagines the space. On what looks like a less-than-gigantic rig, and without ever resorting to

the dully literal business of showing the hard edge of a lit area, he creates an eye-widening variety of spaces. His sculptural way with haze

conjures everything from a bald prison cell to the formal brightness of a governor's mansion, from the prickly heat of dusty sunny days to



English National Opera Death in Venice. Benjamin Paul Griffiths as Tadzio, lighting: Jean Kalman. Photo: Neil Libbert.



The Hothouse, National Theatre. LIA WILLIAMS (Miss Cutts). Lighting by Peter Mumford. Photo: Catherine Ashmore

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The Hothouse, National Theatre. Left to right: FINBAR LYNCH (Gibbs), PAUL RITTER (Lush). Lighting by Peter Mumford. Photo: Catherine Ashmore

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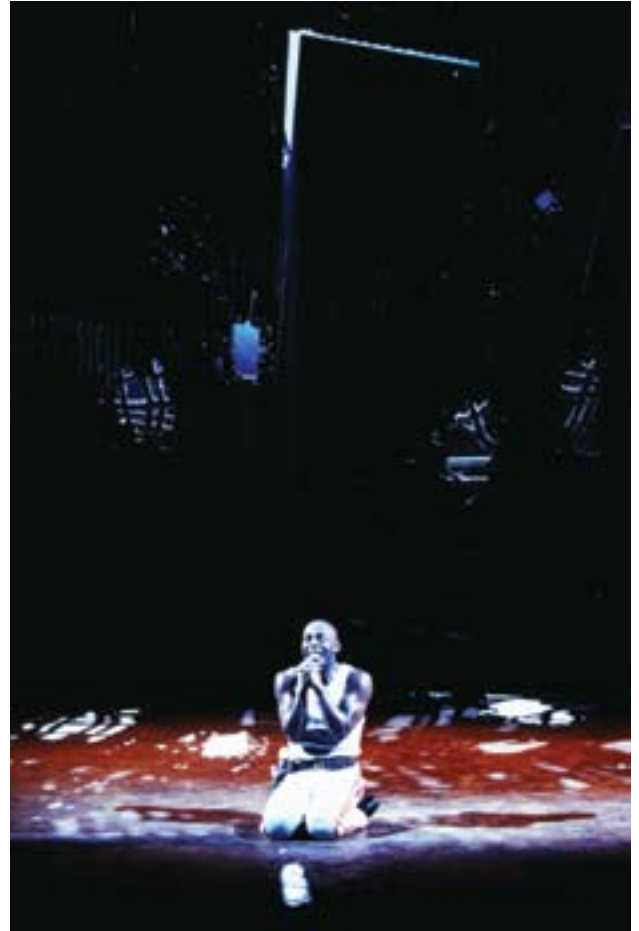


*The Emperor Jones, National Theatre. Lighting by Neil Austin. Photo: Stephen Cummiskey (above).
The Emperor Jones, National Theatre. PATERSON JOSEPH as Brutus Jones, Emperor. Lighting by Neil Austin.
Photo: Stephen Cummiskey (right).*

the sudden lacerating chill of a night-time hanging.

Better yet, director Rob Ashford has removed every button from the show bar the curtain lines. He and Austin harnesses each scene's energy and drive it through to the next, turning a previously passionate show into a truly powerful one.

From a team that has never, theatrically speaking, slept together before, it's a damn sexy result. #



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LIGHTING AT THE DUDLEY HIPPODROME

ALD Fellow Ken Miller remembers when...

Dear Andy,

Having just read the latest *Focus* I have put a few notes together that you might like to put in the next edition about working at the Dudley Hippodrome in 1952.

Here we go, another Monday morning, another week of Variety. Exciting, eh? I arrive at the theatre at 9am sharp and my first job is to go out to the Milk Bar and get the cream doughnuts.

Soon we are having a

sweep of the stage, after the previous night's big band concert. Ted Heath with his singers, Denis Lotis and Lita Rosa. Fantastic. Now the 'acts' are beginning to arrive, their band parts placed in the footlight trough. First to arrive gets first rehearsal slot with our resident pit orchestra. Dance troupes, comedians, 'spec' acts, and the manager of the 'Top of the Bill' now discuss with our stage manager what they

need by way of a set. (We have a good selection of drapes to choose from).

Then I hear, "Who runs the switchboard?" I step forward, perhaps shaking a little. "That's me." (I am just sixteen and still can't believe I'm doing this job). Various people hand me ragtag pieces of paper and I can see at a glance, 'Full up to open', 'Go to reds', 'All colours', 'Fade to blue stage', 'Snap blackout' (it will be years before I hear the term 'DBO'). The comedian says to me, "You're a bit young aren't you?" But then, he *is* a comedian.

The band call begins and I am having trouble hearing some of the instruments. I wonder if, in the future, we will ever use mics in the pit? We are hanging the drapes now, and our SM says, "Let's *swag* these." A technical term?

The bill-topping comedian apparently needs someone to assist in his act. I get chosen

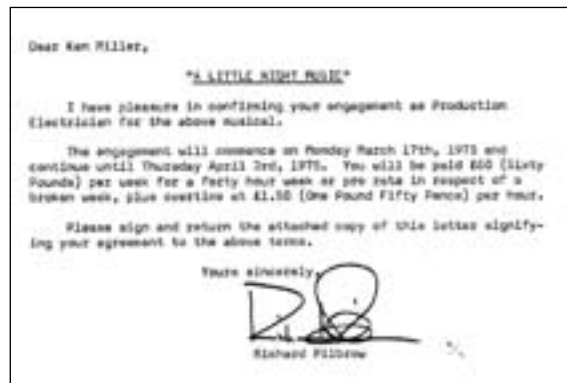
for this simply because I fit the policeman's uniform. During the evening (first house) I am running the Grand Master dressed in my uniform, and feeling a right idiot! When the guy's drunk act is coming to an end, on cue, I leap down from the board, and take hold of my bicycle. Now I am onstage to 'arrest' the drunk. I walk him offstage and throw myself up onto the gantry. Blackout! Will board operators do this in the future? Oh, and while this is going on a 'tame' chimpanzee has escaped from a dressing room and is running amok backstage.

Looking back now, the Variety days were fantastic. Full of clever, strange, and wonderful people with a thousand stories to tell. But then Variety began to die. Mainly due, in my opinion, to the rubbish that started to arrive on the scene. NUDES. It seemed that every other week we were putting on

nude revues. The girls were not allowed to move, which made it easier for me to stare in wonder. I shall never forget some of those tours. Memorable ones? Yes, there were certainly two. See *The Belles Peel* and *Prison Without Bras*.

That was how it began for me, this theatre stuff. But then it was National Service time, and I was shipped off to Cyprus for two years. A few years later I was in London and learning the business again fast. I worked as production electrician with Joe Davis, Michael Northen, Richard Pilbrow, Bob Orno, Bob Bryan, Nick Chelton and many others. Oh, and of course, the lovely Mick Hughes. I miss them all.

Fifty-two years in the theatre and hundreds of tours (all ended by those bloody Monday get/in Monday open shows). When they began to **throw** the productions onstage I knew it was time



Have West End fees increased much?"

to walk away. Memorable productions? Far too many to mention but, *Oh! Calcutta!*, for obvious reasons, with Richard at the Round House. *I and Albert* at the Piccadilly with Mr. Ornbo.

I was recently asked if I would like to do it all again? But come on! I would have to focus all those thousands of ***** lanterns all over again. Now I'm doing okay, I thank the ALD for my award, and as the lovely Mick Hughes would say "Adios".

It was just a thought anyhow.

Ken Miller (Fellow) #



The Dudley Hippodrome lighting desk in 1954 with Alan Hughes. I was teaching him to operate 'the thing' prior to my going off to serve my country"

PRAGUE QUADRENNIAL 2007

Every four years since 1967 Prague has hosted an international festival celebrating contemporary theatre design and architecture. Nick Moran gives Focus his thoughts...

For two weeks in June, PQ 2007 included national exhibits from over fifty countries, alongside a lively and well attended student festival – Scenofest. A fantastic achievement in itself, Scenofest hosted an impressive programme of lectures, workshops and professional meetings, run entirely by volunteers from OISTAT (read more at www.oistat.org) though the strain was evident on many faces.

From Russia...

The Russian national exhibit won the converted Golden Triga for a collection of designs for Chekhov plays that echoed their gold medal winning stand of 1987. The work was displayed in a space that could have been a set itself; decaying walls and a floor covered in water (there were galoshes provided for visitors) evoking

the sorry state of many of the post soviet institutions that mounted the work displayed.

From Brazil...

Another display showing responses to a single playwright was the stimulating Brazilian exhibit. Nelson Rodrigues (who died in 1980, but who clearly remains a major influence within Brazilian theatre) was a “provocative playwright ... his art exposes devastating human passion revealing surprising aspects of the Brazilian soul”. Arresting images from productions of his plays were thoughtfully displayed inside a split level black mesh cage.

From the USA...

Other exhibits were more concerned to show the range of work going on in their territory, though given the relatively small footprint of

each stand this often resulted in sensory overload. A case in point was the US exhibit which attempted to display the work of nearly a hundred theatre artists in around 12 by 12 metres – lots of video, as you can imagine. Several interesting looking productions appeared to employ high powered video projection with imagination and visual flair, though it can be hard to tell what the live audience might have experienced when all you have to go on is video.

From the UK...

The UK national exhibit was not one of the highlights of PQ 2007. Content was drawn from the Collaborators Exhibition staged earlier in the year by the Society of British Theatre Designers in Nottingham. SBTd brought the work of eighteen theatre artists, sadly only one lighting

designer (congratulations to David Howe). The exhibit was dominated by some large sculptural pieces by Ralph Koltai, which took up around half the stand. They are cast in resin, made to look like aged iron, and if they celebrate a collaboration it can only be between designer and maker. The majority of The Collaborators exhibit has a future life at the V&A in London, and I understand that the Koltai sculptures will reside in the courtyard.

Where were the LDs?

The US and UK exhibits had room to display work entered by lighting designers in their own right, and included the lighting designer in the production credits. Too often work that was clearly given power and focus by directed light failed to acknowledge the existence of an LD. Both the Russian and the Brazilian

Nick Moran

Nick has spent 25 years in lighting, as technician, programmer and designer, in many different spaces and for many different kinds of performance. After a long freelance career based mostly in London, he joined ENO as a lighting manager in 2001, and then Central School of Speech & Drama in 2003. He is currently senior lecturer in lighting at Central, and pathway leader of Design for Performance on the BA in Theatre Practice. He remains a practicing lighting designer and will be working with Border Crossings on a new show in the autumn, when his first book “Performance Lighting Design” will be published by A&C Black.



exhibits were guilty of this. Most blatant perhaps was the German exhibit, with huge over-life-size images, many strikingly illuminated, with no credited LD.

PQ still does not award a

prize for lighting design or sound design even though, through the category of “Best Use of Technology in Performance”, it does acknowledge media design. One clear problem is how to display our work for judging at exhibitions such as PQ (and World Stage Design in two years time). Very often judging lighting design away from the context of a production becomes an exercise in rating photographs. (Sound designers must have it even

worse, I guess). We all know the camera does not mimic the response to light of the human eye. How well do flat pictures, still or moving images, digital or analogue, allow a judge or exhibition visitor to understand the experience of the live audience?

Then again, how much insight into the realised performance can you get from model boxes or costume sketches? Are awards for displayed design celebrating

the artefacts rather than performance itself? And is there an alternative? These questions were being asked by many visitors as we wandered round Prague’s Industrial Palace, and its restaurants and bars, and should perhaps reverberate among professional members, and students, if

LDs are to achieve greater recognition for what we do at the World Stage Design exhibition in Korea in 2009, and at PQ2011. #

The Sound Sculptures were commissioned by the OISTAT Sound Working Group and designed and made by staff and students at Central School of Speech & Drama. This one has 2 “rain tubes” either side of a thunder sheet.



Design innovation does not stop with the formal exhibits. This café took the idea of packing to an interesting place. The crew had to re-inflate the ‘stools’ from time to time!

October / November 2007





The Scenofest Stage was made from cardboard boxes filled with Rockwool.



The Russian Exhibit.

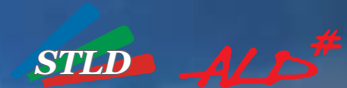
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IS A THOUSAND
TIMES STRONGER
AND NOBLER
THAN AN OVATION.
ADMIRERS
CORRUPT YOU.





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